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Exploring Unique Dimensions of Caring

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The attribute of caring, and its application in the classroom, has emerged to the point that some teacher education programs are giving serious consideration to the implementation of a caring component in their undergraduate curriculums.

For some time the research has been clear; caring is an attribute that enhances the climate for learning and enriches personal relationships. In one study of college students by Teven and McCroskey (1996) students who felt their teachers were caring also reported they learned more both cognitively and affectively from those teachers, and subsequently gave them higher performance evaluations. At all levels it seems the research is reporting higher levels of success for students who believe their teachers care. For instance, Sousa (2005) found that at the middle school level the most highly effective teachers have been identified as those who exhibit caring skills toward their students, and in elementary schools too, caring has been found to be a central characteristic to building sustained student motivation and student commitment toward learning (Casey, 2008). A caring teacher, writes Leo Casey, who works in a caring school community is an especially important element in increasing learning probability for students who are struggling in school. Casey found that for students of color, and for students living in poverty, teachers who possess the attribute of caring are more effective (Casey, 2008).

This paper seeks to increase the growing body of knowledge relative to the “accompanying characteristics” or attendant attributes of caring (submissiveness, sacrifice, the ability to individualize, and being able to anticipate the needs of others). It also offers are four unique philosophical underpinnings of the attribute of caring. These dimensions include the reciprocal nature of caring, the hierarchical nature of caring, the requirement to be pro-active in caring, and being knowledgeable about the changing timetable of caring in people’s lives. In addition, an example of one university’s efforts to integrate caring across the curriculum is examined.

Many of these ideas are already embedded within undergraduate teacher education curricula, but are now presented in such a way so as to shed light on their use as an instrument for teaching caring to improve new teacher effectiveness.

Caring and its Attendant traits

It is a formidable task to expect undergraduate students in four short years to measure up to Martin Buber’s 1965 definition of caring: “Caring is an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others” (p.192). His definition speaks to the need for development of other attendant traits if students are to be capable of affirming and encouraging others at high levels. It requires delineating the specific attributes associated with becoming a caring person and the skills necessary to be pro-active in affirming and encouraging others. Since possessing the attribute of caring does not stand alone, it behooves us to examine the building blocks that need to be developed. They include:

Submissiveness Sacrifice The ability to Individualize Anticipation of Others’ Needs

As soon as we try to define caring or attempt to quantify it, these several companion attitudes and skills repeatedly surface. They are found again and again in the research associated with the caring professions. I have explored these four attendant traits through extending the definition of caring by exposing its complexity and importance.

Caring requires submissiveness

Milton Mayeroff (1971), an early explorer in the field of caring, recorded in his book *On Caring* that one attribute which is developed along the way to possessing true caring is submissiveness- a trait Mayeroff likens to the voluntary submission that a craftsman feels toward his or her discipline and the requirements made on him or her by their building materials. To a great extent a willingness to submit to the rigors and training involved in becoming a more caring person is the first step toward adopting the proper attitude that will enable the attendant characteristics to follow. It first requires submission to a general ethic of caring and a belief in its efficacy- since caring will form the foundation upon which young teachers will build positive relationships with their students. In seeing the grandeur of submissiveness, Henry Miller (1956) responded that ["True strength lies in submission which permits one to dedicate his life, through devotion, to something beyond himself."](#)

Undergraduate students may be convinced of the importance of being submissive to learning about caring by examining the literature that shows the correlation between caring and student learning, and through giving them personal experiences that verify its importance (service-learning, caring for others, etc.).

Caring is defined by sacrifice

Another interesting dimension of caring is its relationship to sacrifice. Those things students value most in life, and care for most in life, are the same things for which they will gladly sacrifice their time and talents. For them, and us, what we care about most in life lies at the heart of who we are. While we know that our caring will vary according to our age and position in life, it nevertheless will require effort, sacrifice, and emotional investment whenever we decide to care. Getting college students to care for others, and not just care about getting good grades in classes can be fostered through service-learning projects, assignments that require investing in others' success, taking on projects that require personal refinement, and documenting instances that show that they are making sacrifices on others' behalf. In addition they won't then reflect on their learning from these various experiences.

Students can sacrifice their time and dedicate themselves to such things as organizations, important causes, sports, or other people. When they sacrifice for other people they offer a sacred gift of themselves, and when they sacrifice for others and it goes unappreciated they offer an especially noble sacrifice. Proactive caring is a benevolent act that demonstrates personal courage and requires a letting go of self-serving interests. Neal A. Maxwell wrote, "Real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the altar and let it be consumed" (Maxwell, 1995, p. 68). Maxwell's powerful quote reminds us of the personal nature of sacrifice, and our need to be willing to address the weaknesses within ourselves which prevent us from becoming better care-givers. Students who engage in sacrificial acts of goodness during their college years are refining themselves and developing an ethos of caring that will pay strong dividends when they become teachers. Being willing to talk about the attributes in class, and schedule activities that make sacrifice less ethereal and more practical will help students operationalize the caring act.

Students will need to reflect on it, talk about it, and be asked to make connections.

Having to adjust our lives to care for others stretches us into maturity. Caring people understand that sacrificing requires time; therefore they must undergo the painful process of prioritizing their lives to accommodate caring for others. For instance, many baby boomers are now experiencing the unique sacrificial challenge of taking care of their aging and often incompetent parents; an event of caring that was not foreseen in their early twenties and thirties. Undergraduate students are no different. They are sacrificing their time and money to be in college and attend classes. Delving into the sacrifice of being in college is one way to explore of the nature and benefits of sacrifice with college students.

Learning to sacrifice is a personal quality that renders superior interpersonal growth. In the famous marshmallow experiment conducted at Stanford University by Walter Mischel (1989) it was found that the ability to delay gratification, to sacrifice what we want now for something better later, reaped incredibly impressive results compared to those who showed no ability to sacrifice. The children who could voluntarily sacrifice were more self-motivated, able to persist in the face of difficulties, had more successful marriages, received higher incomes, enjoyed greater career satisfaction, were in better health, and led more fulfilling lives than most of the population. Clearly, self-sacrifice is a key ingredient in making people more successful and caring. A discussion with a college class, accompanied by appropriate assignments on the nature of caring and the nature of sacrifice, will lead students to examine their priorities in life, and to make appropriate adjustments if they are convinced that more sacrifice in specific areas are needed. Students made need to receive specific assignments in this area and made need to be challenged to experiment with this principle in their lives.

Caring asks that we individualize

The ability to individualize caring and focus it on one person at a time is essential to caring. It is a skill encompassed in an overall ethic of caring and serving others. Without this vital skill it is unlikely that a recipient will feel cared-for. While a shot-gun approach or group lecture approach has some effectiveness in transferring ideas about caring, it is in individual situations that caring is best modeled. Personal individuation requires recognition of a person's individual nature while simultaneously acknowledging that he or she views him or herself as part of a collective group. Neal A. Maxwell believed that our ability to hone our caring to the individual level hits at the root of what genuine caring really comprises. He wrote that our ability to individualize is a test of our capacity to love.

Caring requires the anticipation of others' needs

Following a recent trip to Seoul, Korea, my wife and I were very impressed with the willingness of the Korean people to help total strangers. On several occasions people helped us far beyond what our expectations were. One time we asked directions of a woman on the street. She sensed that we could not find the place we were looking for on our own, and she simply said, "Follow me." She went far out of her way to take us through several winding streets, up and down hills, and finally delivered us to our destination. We would have never found it without her. She had sensed that we could not find the place on our own, and she was right. We were very grateful, and amazed at her service to us, and we perceive it as a true act of caring. We became more softhearted toward her as we thought through the sacrifice and the pro-active behaviors she exhibited as she helped us. I said to my wife, "They simply love to serve others." She responded, "Not only do they love to serve others, but they anticipate your needs, which is even a greater service." What a marvelous new definition of caring my wife gave me;

caring is the ability to anticipate another person's needs and to fulfill them.

Repeated acts of caring humbled us and encouraged us to reciprocate. Weeks later as we attempt to "pass it forward" we have discovered that we must fight through our own selfishness in order to be pro-active and anticipate the needs of others. It requires practice and some new learning on our part, but the spirit of caring was contagious, and it has caused us to reflect on how that Seoul experience could be transferred into college classes, and then projected forward to my college students and onward to the students they will soon be teaching.

One way I have tried to teach "needs anticipation" to pre-service teachers is through the same content used for training new counselors- by teaching them to hear people's needs. This is done through learning effective listening skills such as being pro-active in the focusing of our attention. It was Brazilian Paulo Freire who wrote in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, that the insightful teacher spends quality time listening to what students have to say (Freire, 1990). Freire talks about listening as an active process, involving both caring and interpreting at the same time, while also requiring the listener to be able to construct meaning and respond verbally. Anticipating other people's needs sometimes requires a willingness to be a focused listener who can listen with his or her senses. This skill can be acquired through teaching students to capture the speaker's emotional words and frequently summarizing what the speaker has said in order to check for proper understanding. This will take lots of practice.

Listening in order to anticipate needs is a conditioned (learned) behavior, with motivation being the primary stimulus. Good listening skills include using such techniques as "parroting" (repeating what you just heard the speaker say and "paraphrasing" (summarizing in your own words what you just heard the speaker say). When we use these techniques we are checking with the speaker to be sure we understand accurately their interpretation of events and their immediate needs. It is through effective listening skills and reflecting on what we hear that we acquire understanding and can put into motion behaviors that will help fulfill the speaker's needs. While some students will speak directly to their needs there are others who will be more cautious in revealing what they desire, making listening an intense and challenging activity.

Other practical ways to teach students how to anticipate others' needs include: showing students how to be flexible in their own viewpoints, teaching them to pause and process before they speak, having then capture speakers' reasoning rather than evaluating the correctness of the speaker, and teaching students how to hear the emotions behind the speaker's words. In addition, two other necessary tools are the ability to paraphrase and parrot, and use Rogerian techniques (Carl Rogers, 1951) such as listening non-judgmentally and with empathy. Also, one professor finds good use of this suggestion with students, "Try to hear the answers you could not yourself invent." Role playing and using vignettes in a class to see if students can identify real need, is another good practice for students seeking to be pro-active in anticipating their students' needs.

Besides the four attributes which foster interpersonal caring skills (submissiveness, sacrifice, the ability to individualize, and anticipation of others' needs), there are four additional dimensions of caring that give a fuller picture of the vastness of the caring virtue. They include the reciprocal nature of caring, the hierarchical nature of caring, the requirement to be pro-active with caring, and the changing timetable of our caring. The second and fourth are content typically covered in undergraduate teacher education programs, but are usually not viewed through the lens of understanding caring. The first

dimension is a new idea that not only makes caring somewhat measurable, but puts the focus where it should be... on the recipient.

1. Caring has a reciprocal nature

One unique idea has been brought forward by Nel Noddings of Stanford University, who has had a significant influence on helping faculty clarify the definition of caring and the difficulty of measuring it in undergraduate students. Noddings has written several books and journal articles related to the importance of caring in schools, and in her most recent and celebrated book, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (2005) she gives an interesting insight into the caring relationship. Noddings' revealed:

A caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings – a carer and the recipient of care, or cared-for. In order for the relation to be properly called caring, both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways. A failure on the part of either carer or cared-for blocks completion of caring and, although there may still be a relation– that is, an encounter or connection in which each party feels something toward the other – it is not a caring relation... one can see how useful this relational definition is. No matter how hard teachers try to care, if the caring is not received by students, the claim 'they don't care' has some validity. It suggests strongly that something is very wrong (Noddings, 2005, p. 15).

To illustrate Noddings' point, I turn to a friend of Scandinavian descent whom I love dearly, and am often startled when I hear others say that he is not a caring person. In his defense I usually reply, "He is caring, but he just doesn't show it." After researching the nature and dimensions of caring and pondering Noddings' words, I have been compelled to rethink my defense of my good foreign friend. Why? Because I have come to realize that for the attribute of caring to truly reach fruition it must be recognized and appreciated by another person. I can no longer look at caring as a one-way street. It is reciprocal in nature. It occurs if the person being cared-for feels it.

Noddings' definition makes caring measurable too, because classroom children can easily report whether they feel cared-for (valued and safe) through surveys and follow-up interviews. If caring is viewed through the "single person perspective" (as an individual effort) without considering the effects it has on the cared-for person, we have reduced caring to a non-measurable, subjective attribute. When caring stands alone, with only one person doing the caring, it leaves the vibrant event of caring alone on the dance floor; lifeless, even hollow. It is like dancing without a partner. But when examined from the "mutual perspective," caring becomes both a measurable and definable behavior.

Question. If one person claims he or she is not cared for, but the other person believes he or she has demonstrated caring, has caring really occurred? Noddings would say that no one is to blame if this situation arises; it may just be a case of one person not wanting to cooperate or not feeling the need at that time to engage in caring. We cannot control another person's readiness or willingness to care, as he or she may have a host of reasons for not reciprocating caring gestures at that time.

Another personal example may help to illustrate Noddings' idea of caring gone unappreciated. One time when I was a young boy my mother was about to spank me. As she was about to whack me on my bottom I repeatedly said, "You don't love me, you don't love me." She immediately replied, "I will show you how much I love you," and she commenced spanking me. This story and many more like it, remind

me that caring can be viewed quite differently by the receiver. One may attempt a genuine caring act, but it may be perceived by the cared-for as being an intrusive act. As a result of my experience with my mother, I would conclude that caring is most noble when it is felt (no pun intended) by both parties. What I was feeling I would not have described as a “caring act” by my mother, while she thought she was caring. Mutual reciprocity was not present.

Our efforts to care for others can be one-sided, and even misinterpreted as being hurtful to the other party. Misinterpreted caring remains one of the most emotionally heartbreaking events we can experience when our good intentions are misconstrued and mistaken seen as being an attempt to harm or hurt. Being insightful before acting and accurately assessing others’ needs prior to acting, can strengthen the probability that our caring act will be well-received.

Another circumstance that often prevents mutual reciprocation can occur when a person cannot respond to all the situations that need caring help. Sometimes there are just too many needy people or too many crises to be addressed by only one person. This dilemma is poetically framed in the words of Anne Morrow Lindbergh (2002), “My life cannot implement in action the demands of all the people to whom my heart responds.” Lindbergh’s quote speaks to our need to prioritize our caring efforts. Undergraduate students are keenly aware of the limited time they have to help others, so helping them schedule acts of caring, or giving class credit for meaningful volunteer service has merit. Where student-service has applicability to class content and course theory (theory to practice) both activities become enriched. It should also be noted that more faculty time will be needed if the goal of developing reciprocal relationships in college classes is to be achieved. This will require “creative administrative implementation.”

How do we teach students to recognize the priority needs of those they will serve? Noddings believes we should focus on attending and responding “as nearly as we can to expressed needs.” She adds, when we have to refuse a request—because we lack the necessary resources, find the request unwise, or even evaluate it as morally wrong—we still try to support a caring relation. It can be very different, but our purpose is to connect with the other person, to make both our lives ethically better—not to overcome, defeat, ostracize, or eliminate him” (Noddings, 2005, p. xxv).

2. Caring has a hierarchy

There is a hierarchical dimension to caring. A thorough examination of the definition of caring must include the idea that some things are cared-for more than others. Each of us identifies our own hierarchy or priority of caring according to our values and experiences. For instance, some of us may care more about objects than people. My good friend Mark Geary of Dakota State University in South Dakota said that a person who cares about his or her Ford Mustang is surely exhibiting a different level of caring from the person who cares about providing a safer neighborhood in his or her community. Mark is right, for we have all seen unfortunate “hierarchical mix ups,” especially when a person cares for things more than people, but it does exist. For example, high on some people’s list may be the notion of caring for ideas. I saw a movie where a brilliant mathematician had discovered a new complicated math theorem. When discussing the moment of discovery with a fellow colleague, the astonished colleague asked, “Was it beautiful?”- implying that if the level of caring reached the level of beauty it was truly a remarkable discovery; and one worth caring about. No one would argue that research is unimportant, but I want to make the point that each of us cares about different things. Unfortunately the imbalance of priority of caring can also be seen in marriages too, as well as in the see-saw nature of

what teenagers see as priorities. College class exercises that give students experiences in prioritizing their needs and caring efforts are meaningful activities that teach students the hierarchical nature of caring and service.

For each of us the objects of our caring will be different because the value we place on an object will vary according to our individual beliefs and changing life situations. It was Abraham Maslow (1943) who originally developed a hierarchy of needs, where he showed in pyramid form levels of caring based on personal needs. He showed us that when we are in the situation of being hungry, or cold, or afraid, the priority of caring for others will be low on our individual priority list (low on his hierarchy of needs). When our basic needs are met we are more likely to turn outward and begin to care for others. Our desire to be of service to another person will be minimal when our own personal needs are at risk, but as we are able to satisfy the situations that focus us on our lower egocentric needs, the things we care about will change and result in us being more involved in selfless activities, such as caring.

Stephen Covey (1989) in his popular book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* illustrates Maslow's point so well. Covey asks us to imagine all the air was sucked out of this room right now. What would you want more than anything? The answer would be, you want air! Well, now imagine again that all the air is returned to the room. How badly do you want air now? Not very much, would be the answer. The reason that air is not so important afterwards is because you don't have a need for it. You don't care about air when your need for it is satisfied; it is low on our caring hierarchy.

The simple point made by both Maslow and Covey is that what we care about correlates with what our personal needs are at the time. How we define caring depends on each individual's view and personal situation at a given time; thus making a clear-cut and broad definition of caring fluid over time. Caring varies according to each person's fluctuating hierarchy.

3. Caring requires pro-activity

Although Buber's (1965) description of caring is almost 45 years old, his belief that "Caring is an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others" (p.192), continues to provide a foundational steppingstone from which has sprung new literature aimed at better understanding the importance of being pro-active in our caring. His seminal definition speaks less of caring as a heartfelt emotion and more as an assertive behavioral act. Viewing caring in this manner has allowed recent explorations into caring to focus on behaviors which are observable and measureable.

Martin Buber (1878-1965)

When Buber wrote of caring as a behavior that both affirms and encourages others, he has left academic researchers with the challenge to discover and deliver methods that will assist pre-service teachers to be more effective "affirmers" and "encouragers." This can be accomplished by teaching pre-service teachers how to compliment accurately. They need to know how to compliment or affirm specific behaviors so that they will be repeated. Using words like, "You are being very good today," do not tell the student what behavior he or she needs to repeat in order to be good. Compliments must be specific to a behavior, such as, "I appreciate the patience you are showing by waiting quietly until I recognize your raised hand," or "I like the way you are thinking through your answers before you respond aloud." These last two comments not only affirm (recognize their efforts) but give a clear idea of what behavior is appreciated. To affirm is to



validate, so teaching pre-service teachers to validate student effort requires them to look for the positive achievements and efforts that students generate, and then verbalize those in such a way that encourages future attempts. A teacher can affirm and encourage a behavior (bodily action), an affect (showing appropriate feelings), or cognition (good thinking or scholastic achievement).

So that affirming and encouraging do not create a high external locus of control in students (the desire of students to be teacher-pleasers and not self-directed learners), teachers must be careful in the words they use to affirm and encourage. One powerful tool is to begin sentences this way: "I'll bet that that makes you feel good when you_____." This sentence turns the focus inward as the student analyzes how he or she really feels about the achievement. Another sentence could be started, "If I were you, I would probably be feeling_____." This shifts the student's attention to a more introspective mode, and not one that has him or her only seeking to please the teacher. It can be argued that this technique is a subtle form of manipulation of emotions, but each teacher, through effort, can eventually find affirming and encouraging statements that are genuine and move students toward being responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. This will take both time and practice by students and faculty. Of particular importance here is that the college faculty member models this behavior in his or her own classes while not being afraid to point out why he or she is doing it.

Affirming and encouraging, as well as the attendant traits to caring (submissiveness, sacrifice, the ability to individualize, and the skill of anticipating other people's needs) all require energy and a pro-active stance. Undergraduate students must be willing to experiment with being pro-active in all of these four areas; and particularly verbally active when it comes to affirming and encouraging the students they will teach.

4. Caring has a changing timetable

We have various "durations of caring" that ebb and flow over a lifetime. We also have long-term caring and short-term caring that can occur simultaneously. For instance, we may care very much about getting to a meeting on time, but that is very different from the type of caring we also feel about our reputation or legacy. We can care very much about a short term deadline while still retaining a focus on caring about life-long goals, such as caring about our integrity or our family members. Undergraduate students may be simultaneously caring about the upcoming weekend events (short-term) while also retaining a strong desire to excel in their future occupations (long-term).

Erik Homberger Erikson, a contemporary of Sigmund Freud, wrote about the individual caring eras of our lives, and how they change over time. He described eight psychosocial stages (time spans) of personality growth and revealed that our focus of caring changes to encompass an ever enlarging sphere as we move from cradle to crypt. In 1972 Erikson revealed that as infants we are focused first on mothers, our primary-care experience. Then our caring needs extend to parents, then to the entire family. As we age we expand our circle of what we care about, and begin to care more about schoolmates and neighbors. Then, we care about peers and those we see as mentors (who possess qualities we wish to emulate). Next, Erikson found that in our early twenties we typically move into a relationship with a significant other and begin caring about intimacy needs and career. Finally we begin caring about the accomplishments of others we love (especially children), and then just before death, we care about the accomplishments of our own lives. Have we made a positive contribution during our lifetime? Have we generated a life of worthwhile service? (Austin, 2009)

Each of us selects what is worth adjusting our lives to care about. Persistent adjustment to accommodate caring is a sign of maturity, and fluctuates over time. This persistence of caring throughout our life span formulates our personality and the priorities of our lives. As we progress through life our priorities vacillate, changing with the seasons of life. At different times we care at different levels and we possess varying volumes of caring. The perspective that comes with maturation helps to keep before us the age-appropriate focus of our caring. British author Thomas Malcolm Muggeridge (1966) reflected on how his caring timetable changed as he aged:

Now, the prospect of death overshadows all others for me. I am like a man on a sea voyage nearing his destination. When I embarked, I worried about having a cabin with a porthole, whether I should be asked to sit at the Captain's table, who were the more attractive and important passengers. All such considerations become pointless, however, when I shall soon be disembarking (p. 28)

Muggeridge insightfully writes about our shifting perspective through the lifespan, which, when combined with Erikson's theory, adds an expanded dimension and definition of the nature of caring.

Integrating caring into the curriculum

The research now emerging on the topic of caring indicates a new definition is upon us. The characteristics attendant to the act of caring are being quantified, and some academic researchers are attempting to implement this seminal human relations attribute into the institutional training of undergraduates. One such attempt is being made at Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota, where their College of Education is operationalizing a definition of caring that is both manageable and measurable.

Their mission statement has been articulated by the college's dean, Nancy Hall, in collaboration with constituents of the program including faculty, students, and community members. The mission speaks of graduating "Confident, Competent, and Caring" professionals. The Caring piece in their triad of attributes has been defined in such a way as to be able to be assessed using specific descriptors and student dispositions which will identify successful candidates who meet specifically targeted caring benchmarks. The college's conceptual framework challenges its faculty and their curriculum to graduate pre-service teachers who have the ability to consistently ... establish relationships in an environment of mutual respect and rapport as evidenced by all students feeling valued and safe.

Undergirding this goal is the fostering belief that effective teachers must create an environment of respect and rapport through appropriate interactions with students and through students' appropriate interactions with each other. Research which supports this guiding principle was extrapolated from these findings:

- o Teaching is a matter of relationships among individuals which is grounded in rapport and respect (Costa and Garmston, 2002; Danielson, 1996; Devries and Zan, 1994; Noddings, 2005).
- o Teachers who are effective also create a respectful environment in which all students feel valued and safe (Danielson, 1996; Devries and Zan, 1994; Ellison and Hayes, 2003; Wentzel, 1997).
- o The result of a caring environment is the essential caring that teachers exhibit for their students and the caring that students are encouraged to exhibit for one another.

o Demonstration of respect and rapport reflect the context and depend on nonverbal as well as verbal behavior (Costa and Garmston, 2002; Danielson, 1996; Devries and Zan, 2003; Ellison and Hayes, 2003).

Nancy Hall believes that instructors who are committed to preparing professionals for the 21st century will be caring themselves, and model such care and concern. Core values of the University have been articulated and disseminated which support these beliefs. The core values guide hiring practices and tenure and promotion recommendations. Specifically, all University employees are expected to treat each student with respect and dignity, to value diversity, and honor students' ideas, beliefs and individual differences.

One of several instruments the college uses to gauge its effectiveness in teaching caring is a written assessment similar to the Caring Ability Inventory (a tool used to measure nursing students' ability to care for patients). This inventory is given at the sophomore level to college of education students. In addition, students fill out a narrative statement developed by faculty members Kathy Finkle and Len Austin. The narrative piece asks students to respond to these five items:

- 1) Share some evidence that you are working on behalf of other people's welfare (through activities or organizations or personal relationships in which you demonstrate you look after other people, or are of service to others. How do you show you're caring?
- 2) From other people's perspective, what would they say about you in terms of you being a caring person?
- 3) Identify two characteristics that you think a caring teacher possesses. Then, give examples of what that teacher might do to demonstrate those traits.
- 4) What personal characteristics or personality traits are you attempting to acquire or diminish that would make you more sensitive to others, or make you better able to care and be trusted by students?
- 5) At this point in your life, can you identify a situation where the people you care for would say that in your presence they feel valued and safe?

Both the caring inventory and the five-item written narrative are administered again before graduation, and results are compared and analyzed to see if growth has taken place.

In addition, an introductory educational psychology course finds students often working in small groups, and at the end of the semester students evaluate themselves and each small group member in terms of their caring skills. The evaluation is aligned with the research which formulated the college's four guiding principles:

- 1) In your group did [student's name]help establish an environment of mutual respect?
- 2) Were your comments valued by [student's name]?
- 3) Did you feel safe and valued in your relationship with [student's name]?
- 4) How did [student's name]demonstrate to you that they cared for you?

The college has also developed a unique program called Teammates which begins early in a student's sophomore year. Each student receives class credit for visiting with a child in a local elementary school or secondary school for one-hour each week. The experiences and activities students have with their younger "teammates" are brought back to the college classroom for discussion. Besides the theory-to-practice benefits, college students are engaged in a personal one-on-one relationship where they can practice caring skills. Dean Nancy Hall said, "Teammates is one of the strategies that the college is using to teach caring. When I explain Teammates to new students and parents that is exactly how I describe it. I say that one of the most important skills to learn to become an effective teacher is to learn how to develop a caring relationship on a one to one basis. So...we teach this skill first through the Teammates program" (personal communication, June 9, 2009).

BHSU's college faculty complete Student Disposition Forms, with one area evaluating such caring behaviors as: Can the student take responsibility for establishing a positive classroom climate by making students feel valued? Can the student help children value each other? Can the student work with other professionals to improve the overall learning environment for children? Does the student appreciate and value human diversity? Does the student show respect for others' varied talents and perspectives? Does the student believe all children can learn? Does the student persist in helping others achieve success? Does the student respect others as individuals with differing backgrounds (personal, family, skill levels, talents, interests)? These forms are completed when each student applies for admission into the college of education, and again when he or she begins student teaching, although the questions vary somewhat at these two junctures. However, at any time a faculty member can self-generate a one-page disposition narrative to be placed in a student's file. These narratives can document an area of concern the faculty member has with a student, or can detail a positive incident that illustrates superior achievement in one of the three mission statement areas (Confidence, Competence, or Caring). Student files are evaluated early in a student's curriculum as an initial step in assessing his or her caring level, with an eye being constantly on the priority of graduating teachers who are capable of establishing caring relationships in a classroom environment of mutual respect and rapport as evidenced by their students feeling valued and safe.

Like Buber, BHSU leaders and faculty see caring as an action trait, one that requires students to demonstrate pro-active behaviors and build strong interpersonal relationships with others. The college holds to the premise that in order to genuinely affirm and encourage students there must be foundational content and faculty modeling that leads to the promotion of caring attributes. BHSU is attempting to prove that caring skills and personal refinement efforts can be integrated across the college curriculum prior to a new teacher stepping into his or her own classroom and having to learn through the school of hard knocks.

BHSU's example is one of several that could be cited. The University of South Carolina is experimenting with a caring component in its early childhood curriculum, as are nursing students in

Owens Community College, and college students in Taiwan. Major advancements are also forthcoming from the fields of educational psychology, counseling, and social work. The largest body of work however comes from the field of nursing, where exciting new theories are being developed that are changing the way in which we understand and teach caring.

According to nursing professor Jean Watson (2007), who holds an endowed Chair in Caring Science at the University of Colorado, a Caring Science is developing within nursing schools with roots which stretch into such disciplines as education, philosophy/ethics, and humanities. Since the need for caring skills cut across curriculum boundaries, a theory to explain the nature of caring is quickly becoming an interdisciplinary topic since it has implications for uniting academic disciplines and for producing college graduates and teachers who are more sensitive and humane. According to Watson, the new field of Caring Science is one that draws on the arts and sciences but its perspective is grounded in a world view of unity and connectedness of all people. It is humanitarian in nature, with an orientation and processes focused on human caring phenomenon and caring experiences. The idea of transpersonal caring combines the unity of life and its connections into a model of concentric circles that moves from caring of individual-self to caring for others, to caring for the larger community, to caring for the world, to caring for mother earth, and finally to care for the universe.

The definition of caring will surely be altered and transformed as a more definitive field of study solidifies. As colleges formalize caring into their disciplines (including more caring content, service-learning projects, teacher education field experiences, and global peace initiatives) a more well-defined boundary around the discipline of caring will be built. While distinguishing caring as its own discreet science may heighten its visibility and bring benefits, the singular focus on developing interpersonal caring skills into a discreet field of study should not be done to the detriment of an overall holistic definition that term. There is much to be found in other disciplines that at first glance may seem auxiliary to developing caring skills, but the well-rounded individual who also possesses caring skills, can apply knowledge in a multitude of disciplines and life situations.

Why is it important to understand and develop the attendant underpinning qualities of caring and its new emerging dimensions of caring? It is because these attributes and ideals set a guiding direction for the emerging field, while on the local level they set a positive tone and feeling within an individual that helps establish an environment that is conducive to safety, and learning. A classroom, whether at the college level or the elementary level, which is typified by an insightful person who has submitted him or herself to the goal of caring and understands the importance of individualizing caring, has the tools to create conditions wherein the cared-for feel comfortable asking questions, making mistakes, and taking on the risk of new learning experiences.

In addition to acquiring the knowledge and skills mentioned earlier, Mayeroff (1971) believes a shift in priorities will occur within us. He speaks to the refocusing that will occur as we improve our caring skills. He believes as we develop the primary attribute of caring we realize that other secondary values become less important. Mayeroff wrote,

When a man has been unable to care, or had no one or nothing to care for, comes to care for some other; many matters previously felt to be important fade in insignificance, and those related to caring take on new importance. For example, if my work now gives me the opportunity to care, matters of status (whether I compare favorably with others – which previously seemed very important) become

insignificant. As a caring parent, I recognize the importance of factors in my community having to do with the welfare and growth of children which I did not notice before. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 51).

In reexamining Buber's definition of caring (an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others) it now appears to be ever broadening in scope, especially after examining the various attributes that comprise the meaning of caring. To Buber's idea we have added greater understanding of what it takes to activate his definition, what skills need to be taught, and some of the difficulties in doing so. We can now acknowledge that caring requires us to not only affirm others and encourage others but to understand the mutual-reciprocal component. Caring has a different priority at different times in people's lives, and includes the idea that a person cares about different things as his or her needs and age shift. Caring demands an understanding of the hierarchy in people's lives and suggests that care-givers should possess such attributes as submissiveness, sacrifice, being pro-active in relationships with others, and an ability to individualize caring efforts.

The good news is that caring is emerging with its own content which can be integrated at varying levels within an undergraduate program. It is becoming an important tool in the classroom and a vital teacher characteristic. It is stirring to think of the extending ramifications that caring will have in our schools and communities as more people develop better interpersonal relationships through acquiring caring skills. So while Buber's 1965 definition provided us with a starting point, the pulling together of disparate research has revealed various components of caring that point us toward a new emerging theory, a common definition of the nature of caring, and positive implications for students. These findings must be quantified, measured, and reported back, if teacher education programs are to be convinced that integrating a caring component in their undergraduate curriculums is beneficial. But if past research is any indication of future results, caring has a bright and exciting future in schools.

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